

5/23/2009 Central Christian College Graduation

Central Christian College Graduation

May 23, 2008

President Alexander, faculty and staff, graduates and parents, I am honored to join you today. Every association I have had with Central Christian College has left me with the belief that this college is truly a special institution of higher learning.

Addressing a graduating class is a difficult task. It is difficult to express the meaning of life or to describe what success is. I suppose, in an attempt to make me more comfortable, I've been told not to worry, "Almost no one will be listening and those that do won't remember what you said." So I guess I feel a little better.

Before addressing the graduates, let me first visit with some others that helped make this day possible. First, let me recognize moms and dads. If you ask these seniors who had the most influence on their lives, not one would say "my Congressman." Most likely they would indicate their parents. Few things in life are more important than our jobs as moms and dads. Parents, thank you for all you have done to help your sons and daughters reach this point in their lives. For you this means turning a page as well. As your son or daughter moves on, you can take pride in knowing you have helped them take an important step forward.

I also want to recognize the role of educators - the other people these seniors mention as making a difference in their lives. Central Christian College has been blessed with excellent faculty, many who have changed students' lives in important ways - educators who taught not only facts and figures, but also instilled a love for learning. So today I acknowledge the teachers who helped mold these lives. I hope all teachers find satisfaction in knowing that they have made a tremendous difference in the lives of these seniors. There is no more important, no more noble profession than teaching.

On this Memorial Day weekend I also want to express respect for our service men and women - those servicing today and our military men and women, our veterans who served this country in the past. These seniors, all of us, have the opportunity to pursue our goals and dreams because of the gift of freedom paid by those who served their country generation after generation.

And now to our graduates-let me visit with you about your lives and your futures. Your education at Central Christian College has undoubtedly prepared you well for a job. But more importantly we are called to make a life. Not to make a dollar, but to make a difference. Not just to find happiness, but to pursue usefulness-to seek the good, to true and most importantly the eternal. Success is not achieving wealth, power or fame. Remember that no job, regardless of salary, not indulgence, however tempting; nothing can take the place of a life committed to something other than yourself. Life is more than just being comfortable-in fact comfort is probably the enemy of a good life. This nation will not be better off because we have one more millionaire, but will be better if one more person lives his or life with integrity committed to serving others.

Alexis Tocqueville, the French writer who studied our country in the early 1800s, observed, "American is great because she is good, and if America ceases to be good, she will cease to be great."

The theme of last year's election was "change." While change did happen-we elected a new president; many Americans still seem unsatisfied and now think that we need more and different change. However, to really effectuate change in America, we need Americans themselves to change. Each of you graduates can make a remarkable difference in changing this world by changing the way you live you lives.

James 1:27 - What our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: "to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

If Americans are "good" America can again be great.

We are always looking for great new leaders; and while who we elect to lead our nation is important, I believe we are also in need of great servants and good citizens.

We are instructed in Philippians 2: 3-4 -"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility consider others better than yourself. Each of you should look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others."

Although many in my generation have worked to make the world a better place, our country needs you and your generation. Just opening the morning newspaper or watching the evening news can be depressing. We see horrible things thought unthinkable just a few years ago. To have any hope of addressing our society's problems our citizens and their leaders must change.

Central Christian College is a ministry of the Free Methodist Church and according to its mission statement endeavors to prepare students to be "socially responsible, professionally astute, service oriented and spiritually mature in their faith in Jesus Christ." America needs such people. If we Christians would better fulfill biblical instructions; if we would be changed, we would see the change in our nation that is being called for. The most successful health, education, and welfare program ever created are loving moms and dads, strong families, committed churches and caring communities. It is up to citizens to renew their commitments in not only caring for themselves, but also for the world. I believe that those individuals who volunteer in their neighborhoods, churches and schools and who do so in a way that witnesses to their faith will have the greatest impact on people's lives and in doing so change our world. Indeed the consequence of this involvement, this witness is far greater than any government program or the result of any election.

From my own experience I can tell you that satisfaction does not come from economic well being, status or power in our nation's capital. There is nothing in my background that would suggest that I would grow up to become a Congressman---no financial or political heritage in my family-my Dad worked in the oil fields of Western Kansas and my Mom was the lady you paid your electric bill to in my small hometown of Plainville, Kansas. I am a first generation college graduate that happened to find politics and government interesting. So I set a goal of being a member of the United States House of Representatives. With the help of a great many people I succeeded in reaching that goal thirteen years ago. Being elected to Congress was something I really wanted and a sense of great satisfaction should have followed my election. Despite my electoral success, something was missing. When we set goals for ourselves, if these goals are materialistic or driven by ego, even when the goal is met, we are left feeling unsatisfied. For satisfaction in life comes not in meeting the goals we establish for ourselves; but instead living a life in accordance with God's will-satisfying His plan for our lives.

Psalm 25: 4-5

Show me Your ways, O Lord;

Teach me Your paths.

Lead me in Your truth and teach me,

For You are the God of my salvation.

Through prayer I came to understand that I had been granted an opportunity to be of service to others. I was not elected to office to elevate my standing in the world or to satisfy my ego, but rather to the best of my ability to live a life in service to God, following His plan. Graduates please recognize that success comes not from the things that we accumulate, but by living a life following God's will in service to others. Face the future with the realization that you can make a difference and that the change we desire in our nation comes in part from what we do as individuals.

We have nothing to fear. As the great hymn tells us.

Great is thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see

All I have needed thy great hand hath provided

Great is thy faithfulness

Lord unto me

You have every right to be hopeful for your lives and futures. The world is a large and wonderful place and it is your time to step into it. You are armed with your college education and the character bred into you by family, faculty and friends. You are poised at the threshold of the rest of your life. The challenges are large and the way uncertain, the responsibilities enormous and our own abilities are limited.

Our small voice tells God, "I don't know where we are going."

And God answers: "We are going forward, into the future I have shaped for you."

"But I don't know where that is"

And God answers: "I do; let's go."

"But I am afraid"

And God says: "Of course you are. Any sensible person would be. Let's go."

And we say, "But can I do all that is given me to do?"

And God says: "I have made you, I am with you to the end. Take my hand. Let's go."

So as you graduate, you being today with the God who made you, you walk with the God who guides you and you find completion with the God who loves you.

We need a chance to change the world. And God has always given us that. I hope that 2009 is a year of change. Our challenges are significant. But go with the knowledge that God is with you.

Congratulations and best wish to the Class of 2009. May God bless you as you work to achieve His will for your lives.

